(iv) Proper utilisation of money approved by the Central Government for the Action Plan and its time bound implementation;

(v) Appropriate Medical Treatment to Bhopal Gas Vistims; alternative line of Treatment and continuation of medical research work.

So far as compensation is concerned, all matters relating to this are presently *sub-judice* in the Supreme Court in the hearings on the petitions for the review of the settlement of February, 1989. The Government is supporting the review petitions. As regards Interim Relief, it is being paid to certain categories of victims on the directions of the Supreme Court and the Government of India is also paying Interim Relief at the rate of Rs. 200 per month to all the residents of the 36 wards identified by the State Government, as severely affected. The work of medical treatment and documentation has been done by the Government of Madhya Pradesh by engaging a large number of medical doctors and specialists. The Indian Council of Medical Research and other organisations are making studies of the effects of the gas on the victims. The Action Plan has been scrutinised by the various Expert Groups and thereafter approved by the Government. This action plan is for five years and being implemented by the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Decanalising the Import of Newsprint

1640. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:

SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI KAPIL VERMA:
SHRI SURENDRA SINGH THAKUR:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the statement of the President, Indian Newspaper Society describing the proposed hike in prices of newsprint as unjustified and attributed it to the mishandling by STC and their bankers;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) what final decision has since been taken to reduce the burden of the proposed hike on the newspaper industry, particularly on the small papers;

(d) whether Government propose to decanalise the import of newsprint; and

(e) if not, the steps Government propose to take to safeguard the interests of small and medium newspapers?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (KUMARI GIRIJA VYAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Details are given in the statement attached.

(c) The matter was resolved on mutually agreed cost-sharing formula between the newspaper industry and STC.

(d) and (e) Government's response to issues such as decanalisation is always conditioned by overriding concern for the interests of the small and medium newspapers.

Statement

Allegations of mishandling, made by the President of Indian Newspaper Society against State Trading Corporation of India:

1. The Price Fixation Advisory Committee has been meeting once every quarter and the prices proposed by STC take into account all foreign exchange fluctuations and adjustment of all liabilities on the day of fixation

of prices. This year the price has been revised four times by STC.

2. At none of the meetings prior to 29th July, 1991 has STC informed the newspaper industry of any unadjusted liabilities.

3. On July 3, the newsprint prices were revised to take into account both the devaluations and it was decided to review the prices after a month in case there was further deterioration in the exchange rate. There was no information given at the time by STC of a Rs. 60 crore liability which it is now trying to pass on to the newsprint users. The minutes of the meeting will bear this out.

4. The quantity of newsprint brought by the newspapers earlier has all been used and sold in the form of newspapers to the readers. It is impossible for the newspapers to realise this Rs. 60 crores from readers now. *This is a retrospective levy,* for which there is no retorspective recovery for the user.

5. The newspapers pay for the newsprint in advance before delivery. If STC has chosen not to pay the suppliers and retain this money for all those months/years to their advantage then they must bear the consequences of it too. How can helpless users be expected to pay for the foreign exchange risks of STC where such a forward cover is commonly available and is easily rolled over to any desired period?

6. STC is exploiting its position as a monopoly importer with a captive market and is attempting to pass the cost of its blunders to the hapless consumer.

This new unexpected burden on the price of newsprint is beyond the means of newspapers to bear specially the small and medium newspapers will definitely result in closures.

Decanalising the import of edible oils

1641. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in order to meet the scarcity of edible oils, Government have decided to decanalise the import of edible oils;

(b) if so, the precise situation and circumstances warranting the decision; and

(c) what steps are being taken to ensure the availability of imported edible oils through Public Distribution System?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Since the edible oil is still in the list of canalised items for import, the allocation thereof to States/UTs through Public Distribution System will be made as and when the imports are effected.

Haldia Petro-Complex Scheme

1642. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the broad features of the Haldia Petro-Complex Scheme indicating its foreign exchange contents; and

(b) how the foreign exchange content is sought to be secured?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHINTA MOHAN): (a) West Bengal Indus-